2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

from clinging to the familiar things which form his background. 000
Thus Lawrence, who could live content on dates and honey with no company but that of simple Bedouins, resorted when on service in India to his portable gramophone and played records of the great composers' music, rather than listen enchanted to the monotonous, reedy chant of a hillsman's pipe.

I suppose that segregation from one's womenfolk is one of the hardest privations men have to endure in the desert. The men must have missed their wives and sweethearts, and felt depressed at times by the lonely silence of the desert, when nights are hot and disturbed, and the very stars have a cold, hard glitter. Enforced continence was accepted as a matter of course by the old travellers; at least, one assumes so, for they never seem to mention the matter in their books. This may have been due to old-fashioned delicacy, but I consider that deep thinking and the zeal for exploration had sublimated the normal sex instincts. Their books are scholarly and often restrained and factual in style, so that one rarely has a glimpse of the author's true character or inner thoughts. There is seldom a reference to the most commonplace of biological facts, and one feels that, beneath the bushy beards and thick-lensed sun-glasses, there bubbled a veritable volcano of repressions.

There is no doubt that the man who decides to spend part of his life in the desert must be prepared to overcome normal desires by sublimating them in some way. Work is the most effective antidote, combined with an undiminishing interest in the people of the country, their customs and manners. When one is concerned with other people one begins to forget oneself. The weak man who transgresses the laws of Christian and Mohammedan, and violates the harem or indulges in licentious practices lays up a great store of trouble for himself. He will incur the wrath and contempt of the Arabs, the hostility of his own associates, and may easily contract one of the many terrible diseases of the desert. Gonorrhœa, syphillis, smallpox and leprosy may be the harsh rewards of illicit adventures with the Jezebels of the desert.

The women of respectable Arab families are as remote and 562 565
untouchable as an Indian prince's bride; prisoners of the harem, they are seldom seen in public, and then only in the company of their husbands and retainers, and deeply veiled. The peasant women one sees at all times of the day; they are timid, ragged creatures, about as sweet-smelling as a Malayan durian. They 514 ●
perform their toilet on the shores of the nearest creek, squatting

like black crows as, without a vestige of matronly shame, they relieve themselves. He who would pursue one of these would be a brave and a needy man, in all conscience.

In Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the women are much fairer in colouring and altogether more civilized by Western standards, especially among the merchant and middle classes: although in Iraq one also finds one of the most primitive peoples in the world, the fierce Marsh Arabs, who live in stilted huts in the middle of a swamp. In Baghdad or Basrah you may find female beauty to vie with Cleopatra's, whilst among the Bedouins I have seen girls of regal countenance and poise. Among the women of the Oman tribes, however, the features are simian rather than Semitic, although here and there one sees a dark-eyed beauty with a smooth copper skin and slim ankles. Their make-up would give Elizabeth Arden a few ideas and probably a heart attack. Belladonna and the dye obtained from a desert shrub is poured into the eyes to make them unnaturally bright and large, and the lashes are painted with a dark blue liquid. Lips and the inside of their hands are also stained with henna or some red dye, and the hair is oiled and screwed tightly back from the head.

Europeans have not infrequently married into Arab families, but the women usually came from Bedouin or northern tribes and were fairly civilized. One old man I know, who originally came from Liverpool, married a Syrian woman and had several fine sons by her. At one time a sailor on the old sailing ships, he went to America for several years, later voyaging to Arabia, where he joined a band of Bedouins and remained with them in the desert for several years. I have heard that he even took part in their expeditions. They accepted him as one of themselves and, burned by the desert sun, he came to look more like an Arab than an Englishman. Eventually he discarded Western life and associations altogether, embraced the Islamic faith, and made the pilgrimage to Mecca. 'Haji' Williamson, now a respectable member of the Bahrain community, is a well-known character in the Gulf.

My duties as Manager were fairly simple ones, requiring more alertness of mind and tact in liaising with my neighbours than concentrated effort. Office routine became a habit, easy to one who had undertaken the duties of adjutant and administrative officer in the R.A.F., and in preparing my correspondence and monthly reports to headquarters I was assisted by an efficient and very